

**Stalking microbes: a relentless pursuit of infection control**

R. P. Wenzel. Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2005 ISBN 1-4208-2006-0, 137 pp. Price: US \$ 12.25

*Clin Microbiol Infect* 2006; 12: 700

This is not a textbook, but rather a series of essays and reflections by the author on his long and distinguished career in clinical medicine and clinical epidemiology. The book is divided into a series of chapters, each of which describes the interaction of individuals with a specific micro-organism, or several pathogens, to bring about the phenomenon we recognise as 'infection'. The first three chapters describe the author's formative experiences while training for a career in medicine, and the last five chapters recount specific cases and outbreaks of infection experienced while practising as an infectious diseases specialist. Organisms (and their associated infections) described include *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Vibrio cholerae*, *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, *Rickettsia* spp., *Serratia marcescens*, enterococci, *Proteus mirabilis*, *Streptococcus pyogenes*, *Neisseria meningitidis*, *Bacteroides* spp., *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, *Plasmodium vivax* and *Coccidioides*. More than a few lives were saved along the way. The aim of the book is not only to inform and to educate, but also to provide

an overall perspective and illustration of the characteristics that are of critical importance for a physician specialising in infection control and epidemiology, namely curiosity, independence, and a crucial need to actually listen to the patient as well as relying on modern technology.

The author is a great storyteller and I was immensely entertained. As a practising microbiologist, there is not a great deal of basic science in the book that I wasn't already aware of, but I didn't know about the staphylococcal infection in George Washington's leg, why I need to wear a hat while camping to avoid *Bacteroides* infection, the dangers of fishing for carp with bare hands, and the connection between the 95% CI and horse manure (among many other fascinating facts). If this is the sort of information that you like, then this book is thoroughly recommended and is excellent value. I would also suggest that this book should be essential reading for students and those who are just starting a new career in epidemiology and infection control, not least because, in among the stories, you will find an immense enthusiasm for our profession, a distillation of why we do what we do, and a reaffirmation of the continued need to respect the doctor-patient relationship.

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